What is Inclusive Language?

Video Transcript/Translation

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Narrator: Have you realized that more and more people are speaking like this?

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Narrator: From Spain to Argentina, many people, especially in LGBTQ and Feminist spaces, are looking for alternatives to the use of the “neutral masculine” form of Spanish. In other words, the grammatical rule that uses plural and masculine words to include feminine and masculine subjects. What many do now is change the “o” in “hijos” for an “e” an “x” or an “@.” Another alternative is to “desdoblar” (literally “to unfold”) the language: hijos and hijas, todos and todas, uruguayos and uruguayas. But these linguistic innovations have caused mixed opinions.

**Concepción Company from the Mexican Academy of Language:** Inclusive language makes a supposition that is erroneous: that gender and sex are associated with each other in the grammar of a language. If you say “The perro (“dog” masculine) is the best friend of man,” all dogs, regardless of their sex, their breed, or their species and all humans, regardless of their sex or their sexual preference, are included in that masculine fact. We are waging battles that are superficial, that are just related to grammar, and we are not fighting battles that we need to be fighting such as the need for me (women in general) be paid equally, to be given the same job opportunities.

Narrator: On the other hand, this type of language reflects an important change in our society.

Karina Galperín from the University of Torcuato Di Tella: What we are aiming for now is that language, that at this moment is behind in terms of social change, catch up with society and designate it in a more precise way. Our reality in terms of the presence of women in the public sphere, of sexual minorities, changed in a universal way the last 50 years.

Narrator: The three most-utilized alternatives to the “neutral masculine” are to unfold the masculine and the feminine:

Concepción Company: “All mexicanos and all mexicanas, all españoles and all españolas. So I wonder, why do I have to come in second place? What is going to happen is that we will be putting hierarchies when grammar naturally doesn’t have them?”

Narrator: To use the “@” or the “x”(impossible to pronounce)… and finally to use the “e.”

Karina Galperín: The third gender is utilized for mixed groups or to designate individuals or groups where we don’t mind what gender they are made up of and is used solely for nouns that designate human beings.

Narrator: The RAE (Real Academia de la Lengua Española  Spanish Royal Academy, the institution charged with safeguarding the “correct” use of the Spanish language) does not officially recognize any of these inclusive languages and its posture is basically the following: “Yes, women are discriminated against in our society. But utilizing inclusive language is something difficult to daily, mostly when it comes to speaking.” Remember that the inclusive mechanism in Spanish is the masculine neutral or generic.

Karina Galperín: What the RAE does is to repeat the rule: the feminine designates groups of women, and the masculine designates either groups of men or human beings in general.

Concepción Company: We can’t know if this inclusive language will stay or not, we have to wait for it to solidify. But this doesn’t have anything to do with decrees of the Academy, it doesn’t have to do with decrees of anyone. Rather, if one designates prestige to a certain form it will light up like pine wood and “Boom!”, people imitate it and that’s good.

Narrator: In 2015, the Swiss Language Academy officially recognized the gender- neutral pronoun “hen,” that is between the masculine “han” and the feminine “hon.” The pronoun is generally utilized to refer to trans, non-binary, or when gender is not relevant. In Christmas of 2017, the Swiss Church, started to use this pronoun to refer to Jesus.

Concepción Company: Semitic languages traditionally have never marked gender. Classical Arabic has no gender. Turkish has no gender. Do you think those societies are more egalitarian? Well, no. The majority of languages in the world, do not mark gender and are just as machista or just as egalitarian as their society.

Narrator: The way we speak will not necessarily change the society where we live. But, for trans or non-binary individuals such as Xóchitl, to be able to define the way that people refer to their community means much more than confronting the RAE.

Xóchitl Rodríguez: Inclusive language is simply a way to incorporate more people. If we don’t have the degree of empathy do that, I think the situation is very grim. I think that yes, it is a part of a right to identity.

Narrator: What about you? What do you think about these new inclusive languages?